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THE MOROCCAN QUESTION AS SEEN FROM MOROCCO.

BY ASAAD KALARJI KARAM.

THE doors of the Conference of Algeciras closed after three months of deliberation and discussion. The delegates there drew up and agreed upon a programme for reforming Morocco in the way which seemed to them most suitable under the circumstances. This programme of reform consists of: (1) The organization of a police force; (2) The establishment of a national bank; and (3) An increase in the customs tariff. And so the Conference came to an end, and the delegates returned to their respective countries. The whole world believed that the conclusions of the delegates as embodied in their programme represented the highest skill and wisdom, and chiefs of states conferred upon them decorations and titles. Thus, the Conference of Algeciras having decided upon the programme of reform, it now remains for the conference of the foreign ministers at Tangier to enforce the articles of the Algeciras programme.

It is to be hoped that the ministers in Tangier will not fail to make a thorough investigation of the causes which have reduced the Government of Morocco to its present condition of lamentable corruption and the people of Morocco to poverty and wretchedness. The causes of these evils once being found, it would not be difficult to find a cure for them. It is such action as this that we expected from the Conference of Algeciras. We hoped that the delegates to that Conference would at least obtain a general knowledge of the Moors and of their social condition, in order to be able to prescribe the medicine of reform. But, alas! none of the delegates ever studied the industries of the country, the conditions surrounding the people or the cause of the rebellions in the interior.

But the door of the Algeiras Conference has been closed, and there is no hope of its being reopened. What has been done has been done. The only hope now is that the Conference of the ministers, which is soon to take place in Tangier with the object of putting in motion the machinery of reform, will remedy certain things which the Conference of Algeiras has overlooked. Moorish delegates will attend this conference. It is to be hoped that its deliberations will be carried on in a spirit of frankness and good faith towards Morocco, for upon its decisions will depend the welfare or the misery of the Moorish people.

It is worthy of note that, in official communications to foreign Ambassadors, the Moors have always employed the following form: "To the most beloved, the wise, the striver to establish good understanding between the Governments," etc., for to them this was what an Ambassador was supposed to be. Many foreign representatives in Morocco have proved to be so little deserving of these epithets that the Moorish authorities have sometimes been forced to complain to this or that foreign Government without the knowledge of its accredited representative in Tangier. Consequently, we cannot blame the Moors for mistrusting the diplomatic agents of foreign Powers. Foreign Governments have devoted so little attention to Morocco that they remain to this day in dense ignorance of its internal affairs. Europeans and Americans have but a dim and hazy idea of Moroccan geography, and, indeed, many of them are still capable of addressing letters to "Tangier, *Algiers*, Africa."

It was expected by the Moors that foreign Ambassadors and their *attachés* would know the language of Morocco in order to perform properly the duty of promoting good relations between their own and the Moroccan Governments, for it is only a knowledge of the language that would enable them to study the character and the mode of life of the people. Experience has proven that it is only those rare Ambassadors who have possessed a command of Arabic that have succeeded in dealing with the Moors on a satisfactory basis.

The confidence of the Moors in foreigners in general, and in the Ambassadors in particular, has been sadly shaken by repeated outrages upon the people of Morocco. The abuses of the system of "protection" alone are sufficient to explain the distrust of Moors for Europeans. And what is this "protection"?

In theory, it is meant to secure European merchants in Morocco against losses occasioned by the arbitrary interference of Moorish officials with the native commercial agents, or with other native employees of such merchants. By the treaty of Madrid in 1861, it was stipulated:

(1) That Moorish servants in the employ of Europeans were to be exempted from taxation, and were not to be arrested, or interfered with in any way, by the Moorish officials without the consent of the foreign consul directly interested;

(2) That foreign merchants should be permitted to choose, from among the Moors, certain persons to serve as their commercial agents in the interior. Such agents (*Semsar*) were to be regarded by the Moorish Government as subjects of the country of their foreign employer. Foreign merchants were also to have the privilege of forming partnerships with Moors. The Moors thus taken into partnership were to enjoy the same immunities and privileges as Moorish servants in the employ of foreigners. But the practice under this system is now that any Moor of bad character, who wishes to escape the Moorish authorities, can purchase, for a handsome sum of money, the protection of some foreigner. Such protected Moors often gather about them the worst characters of their neighborhood. To these, in turn, they extend a sort of elastic semi-official protection. In this way, through the action of foreign diplomacy, bands of lawless rascals are formed here and there throughout the country. These men become the terror of their districts. They indulge in all sorts of violence and crime, and set the Moorish authorities at defiance.

It sometimes happens that, after such a *protégé* has amassed a considerable fortune, his Christian protector will, for a good round sum, sell him to the Moorish Governor of his district. The blood-money having been paid down, the foreigner places in the hand of the Governor a written statement to the effect that he withdraws his protection from A or B. The Governor then arrests and throws into prison A or B, together with all his family, friends and followers, and confiscates their property for his own private use. The Moorish Government has often complained of these things to the Powers, but none of the Powers has taken heed or attempted to remedy the abuses of the system.

And now the Powers are setting out to reform Morocco ac-

according to the latest civilized methods. The establishing of a police force in Morocco is much desired by the Europeans; but to the Moor himself this innovation is by no means desirable. He does not feel the need of it, nor can he be brought to believe that any good can come of it. As long as the mental attitude of the Moors remains unchanged, it will not be possible to establish a police force in Morocco on the lines laid down by the Conference of Algeciras. And, supposing that a police force is formed, the officers of this force must be foreigners, and foreigners in the Moorish service have never yet been of any real benefit to anything except their own pockets. See what has been accomplished by them in the military service! They have spent more than a quarter of a century instructing the army; and yet, face to face with the rabble forces of Bou Hamara, the conduct of the imperial army reflected anything but credit upon its instructors. Probably the chiefs of the new police force will be of much the same material as the instructors of the army. Moreover, the action of the police is to be limited to certain restricted localities where their protection is hardly needed. What influence can they have upon the people of the interior, who have little or no regard for authority of any sort?

And in regard to the bank. The Moors have not the least comprehension of the workings of a bank, and, moreover, their religion forbids them to deposit their money in one. Moors who have money bank it in the ground. Many of them die without disclosing to any one else their place of deposit. No Moor dares to appear rich for fear of being cast into prison and despoiled by the officials of his Government, or for fear of assassination at the hands of other robbers. The Government has no public works, and the mass of the people have no arts and trades. The bank will find it next to impossible to deal with the Moors.

The increase in the customs tariff which has been agreed upon by the Conference of Algeciras is but another way of robbing the nation, because it is the nation itself that must pay the piper, and the nation cannot sustain any further burden. The Conference should have induced the Moorish Government to revive the arts, increase trade and encourage agriculture, but at the same time to impose a high duty on alcoholic beverages and upon articles which compete with the rare native manufactures.

The Conference of the foreign ministers in Tangier should

realize that the real reform required in Morocco consists of two things. The first is the reform of the legations. The Ambassadors and their subordinates ought to be, in themselves, examples of justice. But the actions of some of them have redounded to the discredit of all. The Moor is only human, like his Christian brethren. He generally appreciates a good deed and seldom forgets a bad one. At present, he believes that foreigners are his enemies and that they should be treated as such. When the legations are reformed, and the deeds of foreign representatives are more in accord with their words, the Moors will, no doubt, come to trust them and take their advice. We often hear from the Moors that no justice is to be had of foreigners. They say that cases brought before the consuls are invariably decided in favor of the foreigners. In addition to the vexations of litigation before the consuls and the evils arising from the protection of native rascals by foreigners, the Moors suffer from another great abuse—namely, the contraband trade in arms. The Moors themselves say that the legations wink at the smuggling of arms into Morocco by Europeans, and that, when the ignorant and fanatical population of the interior have been supplied with guns and cartridges in abundance, the legations blame the Moorish authorities for the resulting disorders. Sometimes permits are obtained from the legations for passing through the custom-house cases, marked “Mineral Water,” etc., of which the real contents are rifles and cartridges. Another method of having arms passed through the custom-house is for the smuggler to buy the complicity of the native soldiers of the legation. In this case, the soldier goes to the custom-house and states that the minister or consul has sent him to claim such and such boxes of goods. The boxes are thus passed unopened, and, once through the custom-house, are taken to the house of the real owner.

The second part of real reform is the application of the Koranic law by competent and honest judges. The Mohammedan Law contains all that is necessary for the good government of the country. The Moor believes in the infallibility of his Law; it is the only thing which he can fall back upon in cases of doubt; he honors it; he respects those charged with its administration; he swears by it. History tells us that the Mohammedans, in the high tide of their conquests, carried their Law with them and enforced it wherever they went, carefully preserving it

in its integrity. In the history of Morocco we read that several sultans devoted themselves to the study of their Law, and by their personal attendance at the universities encouraged its exposition. But times have changed. Modern rulers of Morocco care little for the Law. Moorish judges respect no law in their decisions, but twist and turn the code to their own private gain. To the mind of a modern judge the cleverest and most convincing argument is a goodly bribe. Litigants are often forced to abandon their cases because they find themselves unable to satisfy the greed of the judges. The following is an example of modern justice: Two adversaries present themselves before the judge. The plaintiff states his case. The defendant (who has already sent to the judge's house a handsome mirror) states *his* case, at the same time casting a significant glance at the judge. The judge is about to decide in favor of the defendant, when the plaintiff (who is not at law for the first time) gives the judge a knowing look and begs that judgment may be deferred until the following day. The request is granted. The following morning, the plaintiff goes personally to the judge's house with a magnificent mule. He finds that the judge has already gone to the court, so he leaves the mule and instructs the servants to inform the judge of the animal's arrival. The plaintiff then goes on his way to the court, where he finds the judge and the defendant. While the adversaries are standing before the judge, a servant of the latter enters, and announces that "The mule has smashed the mirror!" Judgment is at once rendered in favor of the plaintiff.

The most important thing for the Conference of the ministers at Tangier to consider is how to enforce in Morocco a strict application of the Mohammedan Law. If they only inquire into the means by which England has brought about the prosperity of Egypt, they will find that Lord Cromer is a protector of the Mohammedan Law, the strict application of which has shielded the poor Egyptians from the rapacity of the officials and of the upper classes. There is in the hands of every judge in Egypt an epitome of the Koranic Law—"The Book of Justice." This volume could easily be adapted for use in Morocco as a guide to the proper administration of justice. In fine, Morocco is in great need of reform, not on Christian but on Mohammedan lines.

ASAAD KALARJI KARAM.